

By [SARAH E. NEEDLEMAN](#)

For Segundo Baldovino, the decision to become an entrepreneur last year was a no-brainer. The hard part was choosing what type of business to launch.

Mr. Baldovino was laid off in January 2009 from a management position at Ford Motor in Detroit. After several months of job hunting, he determined that his best option for working again would be to start his own company. But he only knew what industry he *didn't* want to pursue: the one he had just come from.

"I said to myself, I got to do something. I have a family to feed, a mortgage to pay," Mr. Baldovino recalls. But "I didn't know what kind of business I wanted to get into."

### *You Have to Love It*

Choosing a business to pursue is always a challenge -- and it's especially so when you need to act fast. Some people might feel most comfortable sticking with an industry or field they've already worked in, while others may be inclined to try something new. Regardless, there are several factors to consider, including start-up costs and the amount of competition a business category entails, but experts say one of the most important is choosing a path that will keep you motivated for the long haul.

"Passion is critical because it will get you up each morning," says Nancy F. Koehn, an entrepreneurial historian at Harvard Business School. "If you don't love what you're doing at the beginning, you're going to be in real trouble."

Last July, Lucinda Sierra turned her six-year-old hobby of making themed cakes out of small chocolates into the Little Candy Cake Company. She says she opted to try her hand at entrepreneurship after she broke her foot and was forced to put her job as a freelance costume designer on ice.

"I never set out to have my own company," says Ms. Sierra. "Life just pushed me into it."

At first, Ms. Sierra was concerned about whether anyone would actually buy her custom candy cakes. To test the waters, she put four cakes for sale on Etsy.com, an online crafts marketplace with 4.4 million members. Within less than a month, she secured an order for 150 cakes.

These days, Ms. Sierra averages five orders per month for a total of around 1,000 cakes through Etsy, her company's Web site or referrals. She charges between \$4 and \$20 per cake, depending on their size. She has three employees -- her mother, husband and niece -- and recently signed a six-month lease for retail space at Limelight Marketplace, a new bazaar opening in Manhattan this week.

"I absolutely love doing this," she says.

### *Proven Approach*

Aspiring entrepreneurs who don't have a long-brewing idea or hobby to propel into a business can always turn to an already-proven model: a franchise.

In October, Mr. Baldovino, the former auto-industry worker, and his brother-in-law, Marty Navarra, purchased a Senior ComforCare Services franchise in St. Claire Shores, Mich. Today, they have six customers and 16 employees.

Mr. Baldovino says he liked the ComforCare franchise because it provides the kind of personalized service he'd want for his mother, who has Alzheimer's disease, if his father wasn't alive to care for her.

"If I did it alone," he says, "I'd be starting from scratch."

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